PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNALISM

LESSON NINE

UNIVERSAL PHOTOGRAPHERS
INC.

10 WEST 33RD STREET · NEW YORK, N. Y.

Read Each Lesson with Great Care

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of the Complete Course in
Photographic Journalism

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LESSON IX

DEVELOPING THE HOME FIELD

Fig. 1.—*A typical set. This set of seven pictures illustrating the largest suspension bridge in the world, is arranged in a layout such as is often used for such purposes. You are not required to make the layout, as this is done in the editorial office, but it is advisable for you to practice it in order to provide pictures suitable for such use.*

YOUR BEST LOCATION YOUR OWN HOME

1. One of the greatest attractions of photographic journalism is the fact that it may be followed as profitably from your own home as it can from an elaborate office. As a matter of fact the home location is the best.

2. In many professions the leaders are those who have gone to a large city where their particular profession is centered, but in the field of photographic journalism the opposite is true. The photographer must be at the scene of action in order to secure the photographs. The great value of the photographic journalist in the modern publishing world lies in the fact that he and his fellows literally cover the Earth, each acting as a news outpost sending in to the central office the outstanding events of his own particular locality. If the cameramen were all centralized, we should have only those photographs which depict the events of those centralized localities and our information regarding the Earth would be too highly restricted to be of great value.

3. The best location for your work is right in your own home neighborhood.

4. One of the most common complaints we hear is the statement that nothing takes place in the vicinity of the cameraman. A photographer has great difficulty in seeing the opportunities which abound upon all sides of him.

5. A photographic journalist in Guatemala writes that he can find nothing of interest in his locality. Nothing but poverty stricken natives, primitive living conditions, disease, heat and a multitude of other grievances. If he were only in the Middle West he could find unlimited opportunity in the historical locations there, the Mississippi with its lore of legend and beauty and so forth.

CULTIVATE OBSERVATION

6. From Louisville a man writes that while he can cover territory embracing most of the upper Mississippi Valley he can find nothing to photograph. His surroundings are all so commonplace that they would be of interest to no one. If he could go to New York where tremendous events occur every day then he could make a fortune.

7. In New York a photographic journalist complains that of all places in the world New York is the worst from his point of view. Noth-

ing ever happens. Things which do take place are spot news only, suitable only for the newspapers who have their staff men on the job. New York is monotonous, too absorbed in business to provide material for the camera, and besides everyone is familiar with the city so that nothing new can be found. If he could go to Central America where local color abounds, where the ruins are being excavated, where there is so much feminine beauty, he could make thousands of dollars.

FAMILIARITY WITH SUBJECT A GREAT ASSET

8. And so it goes. Each man who lies down on the job is sure that if he were only where the other man is he could make a fortune. He is right, but *he has an even better chance to make it right where he is.* The very familiarity which makes us believe that there is no interest in a subject is the thing which will enable us to photograph that subject in a manner to present its most interesting aspect to those who are not familiar with it.

9. *No matter where you are, more than 99% of the population of the world is not familiar with your locality!*

10. You have been given instructions as to how to cultivate your power of observation. Imagine that you were entirely unfamiliar with your own neighborhood. Then go out upon an observation expedition. Examine everything you see and really become acquainted with your own home. You will find that there are many interesting things you did not know and also that many of the things with which you are familiar would be deeply interesting to others.

IDEAS FROM MAGAZINES

11. Look through illustrated magazines and at each picture stop and see if you cannot think of some similar subject in your own neighborhood.

LOCAL HISTORY

12. Talk with the older people, see if there is not some place near you which is connected with some event of interest in the earlier history of the country. This line of research has led several photographic journalists into fascinating and well paying bypaths.

13. Keep abreast of local events. The annual picnic of the Lotusville Volunteer Fire Department may not interest the editor of a New York newspaper, but the editors of the state and county papers will be interested. The clever photographer will try to secure some photographs which, by the addition of selling captions will be purchased by magazine editors. Remember it is not always the subject which sells—it is often the treatment and the caption.

SELLING PHOTOGRAPHS OF LOCAL EVENTS

14. In making such local event photographs remember that there will be a sale for from one dozen to one hundred or more prints to those who were present.

15. You may have difficulty in thinking of ideas which will be suitable for making saleable photographs. One source of ideas is a careful reading of newspapers. You should read the leading newspaper of your city, the leading newspaper of the state and at least one newspaper from the nearest large city such as Chicago, New York, Atlanta, New Orleans, San Francisco, Denver, St. Louis and so forth.

16. In your own paper you may run across a paragraph which states that a local boy has won a prize in the corn club contest. You might get a picture of him and sell to an agricultural journal, but if you are alert you will follow this reasoning.

VARIOUS FORMS OF TREATMENT

17. Boy wins prize for corn—Corn is the outstanding native cereal of this country—Indians raised corn—What did their corn look like—Hopi Indians prized their varicolored corn—Corn fifty years ago did not compare with corn now—Development of corn quality a practical demonstration of controlled evolution—What part did corn clubs play—Do the boys know what they are doing—What effect have corn clubs upon the nation's welfare—More corn with less effort on less ground means greater food resources.

18. You jot these down and then you plan your feature story such as *OUR DAILY BREAD* or *BENEFACTORS OF THE NATION* (Directly treating of the value of corn clubs) *400 YEARS OF LOWLY CORN*. Perhaps you will treat the subject of development and improvement in *CORN THAT HAS BEEN TO COLLEGE,* or if you have a good market for an evolutionary story you might work from the angle *PRACTICAL EVOLUTION A BOON TO HUMANITY.*

19. Here we have an example of how a simple little item of news which would of itself hardly be of interest over a radius of ten miles supplies the germ for three or four different illustrated articles for national magazines.

ETHICAL IMITATION

20. Another source of ideas is the illustrated magazine itself. Suppose you are living in Arizona and you read an article about the skyscrapers of New York. Incidentally the skyscraper story was written by a man with his eyes open to the possibilities of his own environment. You look at the pictures and read the captions and you find one picture which reminds you of some of the prehistoric cliff dwellings of your own

state. What? Why certainly there is the answer *PREHISTORIC SKY-SCRAPERS OF AMERICA* and with that catch title you prepare a series showing the cliff dwellings. In this case an association of ideas leads to imitation which bears no resemblance to the original and is therefore both legitimate and ethical.

SUGGESTIONS FROM ACQUAINTANCES

21. Cultivate a wide circle of acquaintances. As soon as they learn what you are doing, suggestions will pour in upon you until you are swamped. Don't make the mistake of disregarding these suggestions. Indeed, nine out of ten will be worthless, but this is something you don't know until you have examined and analysed it. The tenth one which is either good or which suggests an original idea to you which is good will repay the trouble spent in considering each suggestion. In the great amount of chaff there must be some good grain which you cannot afford to overlook.

22. When you do make use of one of these suggestions, it is well to give one or two photographs to the person who made the suggestion. He will be pleased and will be more active than ever in trying to help you. This unsolicited and unpaid assistance often leads to a series or a set which pays exceptionally well.

CULTIVATE ACUTE PERCEPTION

23. Cultivate the power of analysis, and cultivate the habit of never casting aside an idea until you know for sure that it contains no possible germ from which might be developed something worth while. Remember you are the eyes of millions of readers. You cannot afford to be as careless as when your eyes served yourself alone. You are somewhat in the position of a banker. The banker holds other people's money, and he has constantly offered to him opportunities for investment. He must weigh each one carefully. If it were his own money he could take a chance but as the money belongs to others he must be careful.

CONSIDER ALL POSSIBILITIES

24. To you is given the discretionary power of accepting and rejecting information for which the world awaits. If you are to succeed you must learn never to let a good subject pass. Perhaps you may err upon the other side and accept something not up to standard, but in this case the editor can reject it—*The Editor cannot go over your head and accept something you have refused to submit to him!* So it is your responsibility never to pass anything which would make a good subject.

25. It is to your financial advantage to sell all of the photographs you can, but even above this there is the duty which you owe to the

world to collect and arrange for its information every possible subject which comes to your notice.

PHOTOGRAPHY OF PEOPLE

26. A great deal of your work in photographic journalism will be the photography of individuals, not merely the inclusion of the human figure within the photograph, but the specific delineation which definitely establishes the identity of the individual. This photograph may be a portrait or it may be an action photograph. The action photograph may be characteristic action of the subject or a carefully posed genre study, but in any event the photograph serves to present to the reader the physical appearance of the original.

PERSONALITY PHOTOGRAPHS

27. Conventional portraits are not always the most desirable form for the photograph of the individual. It should be of such type that it will show something of the personal character of the original. For this reason such photographs are usually referred to as *personality photographs*.

28. It is sometimes difficult to judge the value of the personality photograph, as this depends upon several factors, the first one of which is the identity of the periodical in which the photograph is to appear.

29. Let us take Jonesville as an example. Jonesville is a small town in the Middle West, and has let us say, a population of ten thousand.

JUDGING VALUE OF PERSONALITY PHOTOGRAPHS

30. Professor Samuel Brown of New York University was born in Jonesville and spent his youth there. The Jonesville High School invited Professor Brown to address them during the Commencement exercises and he accepted. There will be a long story in the *Jonesville News* together with a double column portrait of Professor Brown. If there is no press of important news the *Capitol City Star* may run a brief story with a single column picture. This about sums up the possibilities.

PERSONALITY INTEREST INCREASED

31. But suppose Professor Brown takes as the subject of his address *The Dangers of Prohibition* and makes the statement that the civilization of the world depends upon the abolition of prohibition, and that the rising generation must shoulder the responsibility for this abolition. In this case metropolitan papers will probably give the story an inside fractional column with a picture and one or two national magazines

will run the story with full text of the address. These will be magazines which are actively participating in the prohibition controversy. The interest of the professor's address has become national in a minor sense.

32. If the professor is an ardent crusader, and he finds that the state in which Jonesville is located has an anti-evolutionary law he may build his address upon the thesis that in any controversy between evolution and religion, religion must lose. Here we have a situation which may flame into an international incident. To fully appreciate this recall the millions of words and the hundreds of photographs which were published about the famous Scopes-Tennessee trial. Under such circumstances Brown's portrait will appear in every publication of any importance in the country.

33. Let us now consider another phase of this subject. The President of the United States is always a good subject, but because he is such a good subject and because so many photographs are available editors will not be interested unless the President is shown in some unusual pose or engaged in some activity or ceremony of national interest. It is impossible to sell a conventional portrait of the President because every publication in the country has a number of them on hand to be used in any case which might make it appropriate.

34. While, in any case, it is the individuality of the person who is photographed, the value of the personality photograph must always depend upon the existing circumstances and the interest value of the incident with which the individual is connected.

PHOTOGRAPHY AT RESORTS

35. Resorts always provide an abundance of personality work for here we find people prominent in society, financial world, politics, stage and screen. Many photographic journalists specialize in this type of photography, but it must be remembered that the great majority of the work turned out is for newspaper publication and that it is only the more unusual pose which goes to the magazine.

PERSONAL PRINT SALES

36. There are many opportunities for extra income in resort work. We will suppose for example that Mrs. Tompkins-Smith, the society leader has given an informal swimming party for the guests of the hotel where she is staying. Due to the conditions the invitation list has been made to include all the guests indiscriminately. There are photographs made for publication, and then the photographer arranges with the hotel cigar stand to sell additional prints of this group picture. Many guests will purchase these by the dozen to send to friends showing that

Mr. Guest is on friendly terms with Mrs. Tompkins-Smith. It is a human failing which can be made to give very satisfactory returns.

SOCIETY PHOTOGRAPHS

37. But suppose that Mrs. Tompkins-Smith remains aloof and does not give such a party. You will send in your card requesting an interview. You need not fear a refusal, for women of Mrs. Tompkins-Smith's class could not exist without the support of the newspapers. No matter how they claim to despise the press they will always grant an interview. Tell her that you want to make a photograph for illustrating a society article. You will be given the opportunity.

38. In making such a photograph call into play every bit of photographic skill you possess. Make a portrait. Do not strive for the reproduction value, but make the best portrait of which you are capable. When it is completed take a finished and mounted print to Mrs. Tompkins-Smith for her approval. If you have done a good job you will probably receive an order for from one to twenty dozen additional prints. When these have been delivered (at a good stiff price) you may proceed with hard paper and strong developer to snap up the contrasts to make the engraver's job easier.

HOME PORTRAITURE

39. Many resort photographers have added as much as one hundred percent to their income through establishing themselves as home portrait photographers.

40. The visitors at the society resort usually have access at home to the best portrait photographers, but at the resort they want home portraits, outdoor portraits, genre studies and in short the range of subjects usually covered by the vacation snapshot, but produced with the skill and quality of professional work.

41. These suggestions regarding personality and resort work are made for the benefit of those who can take advantage of them without leaving their homes. It is not suggested that you go to some distant resort, for example, and do this work, for you will find that the lack of familiarity will be a handicap in this particular type of work. Again we must emphasise the fact that no matter where your home may be YOUR best opportunity is at home.

MAKING SERIES AND SETS AT HOME

VALUE OF SETS

42. A group of photographs built about a single subject is usually worth considerably more than the components would be individually.

If a single photograph is worth five dollars, five in a set would p ably bring from forty to sixty dollars. For this reason it is always visable to build up a set *whenever the subject matter has sufficient portance to warrant such a step!*

43. Conversely, the importance of the subject often depends up the interest created by original treatment, so that we may accept axiomatic the statement that *practically any subject may be expand into a set if sufficient attention is given to the work.*

SETS AND SERIES

44. A group of pictures may be a set, in which case the individual pictures are all related in a general manner; or it may be a series in which the individual pictures are related to one another in a definite successive order. The sequence of the series may be the sequence of time, the sequence of location or the sequence of development.

TIME SEQUENCE

45. One of the most familiar time sequence series is that which shows the construction of a building, the development of agricultural crops and similar subjects. A manufacturer of firearms was responsible for the production of a series of posed costume photographs showing the development of arms from the long bow to the modern military rifle. A similar series showed the development of shoes from the most primitive sandals to the modern shoe. We have the contemporary time sequence and the historical time sequence. One series showing the blossoming of the century plant may embrace a total time of two hours and another such as the shoe series a period of time seven thousand years long, but both are time or chronological sequences.

DEVELOPMENT SEQUENCE

46. As we shall see there is no definite division between the short time sequence and the development sequence. The construction of a building is certainly a sequence of development as well as one of time. A series showing an ant struggling with a dead grasshopper and taking the larger insect to the anthill is purely a short time sequence, while the construction of a footstool is purely a developmental sequence as the pictures will not be in strict time sequence. In such a set number four may have been made first then number seven, then five, six, nine, one, eight, two and three in the order given *or in any other order which will show the steps in the construction in the order most easy for the reader to follow.* Thus we see that while short period time and development may overlap, there are cases in which the series belongs definitely to one or to the other.

SEQUENCE OF PLACE

47. Sequence of place, as a rule also includes sequence of time, but is differentiated from the time sequence by the importance of the place sequence. Thus if you are making a series of photographs showing a journey to Algiers and return, you would use most of the pictures showing the outward bound journey, with just two or three showing the return. As a matter of fact you might make more pictures upon the return trip, but these would be transposed to show the complete journey outward, and the return represented by the two or three pictures necessary to bring the reader back home.

48. In series first determine which is the most important sequence, time, place or development. Then establish the order in which the individual pictures appear, and be sure to maintain this order throughout the series. Nothing is more confusing to the reader than a series in which an odd picture suddenly pops up out of its natural and orderly position.

SETS

49. Of course there are groups of photographs which are closely related but which have no definite sequence of order. We might, for example, show an old castle and its surroundings. We would show the court, the walls, the towers and details which might present themselves. We might make a set showing the birds and insects which appear in the course of a single day to feast upon the ripening wheat in a field. We might make a set showing the individual pieces in a collection of old books. Such sets are of general interest and are typical of sets which would appear in general interest publications.

50. There are many magazines such as *Popular Homecraft* which are devoted to the practice of the arts and crafts at home. All kinds of handwork, woodworking, leather and metal work, toy making, and so forth are treated. Such magazines want sets of pictures to illustrate their articles. Such sets of illustrations are either non-consecutive sets or developmental series.

HOW-TO-DO-IT SETS

51. This is a good market and many photographers have taken advantage of it by collaborating with amateur craftsmen. If you know someone who is always tinkering around, who builds radios or who makes furniture, one who likes to fix up the house or the garden, go to him and offer to work with him upon series. This collaborator will originate the ideas, will describe the processes, provide a list of materials and pose for the action photographs. You make the pictures, and using his explanation write a simple, direct description of the sub-

ject. The craftsman will supply drawings which you should submit with the photographs.

DEVELOPING WRITING ABILITY

52. This type of work does not require high literary ability, but it does give practice in developing clear, straightforward writing which will lead you later into the field of general feature article writing, a field which can so easily and profitably be combined with photographic journalism.

53. The way to make a start is to begin. Make photographs, examine and criticise them, make new ones until you are satisfied that you have a finished photograph which tells the story you want it to tell. Then prepare the caption and submit the photograph to an editor. If it comes back send it somewhere else. Keep everlastingly at it. Soon you will sell a few, then a few more and before you realize it you will be in a position to give your full time to this fascinating profession if you care to do so. If you do not you will find that you can utilize every spare moment of your time profitably and in a most pleasant manner.

54. The proper location for your headquarters is in your own home. From there you can make use of the unlimited material which is around you. As you develop facility through actual practice you will find yourself headed inevitably toward that most attractive goal, successful feature writing for the magazines—but never lose sight of the fact that it is the *photograph* which is the heart of the feature.

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THIS COURSE CONSISTS OF:

1. Sixteen lessons of detailed instruction in Photographic Journalism.
2. Examinations and tests issued periodically.
3. Special assignments designed to develop your journalistic sense.
4. Practical working assignments to develop your ability to work out your ideas.
5. Exercises to develop your photographic and journalistic ability.
6. Instructions for analysis to show you just what the market demands at any time.
7. Specimen illustrations which have actually been published, showing the type of photographs which sell.
8. PRESS CARD. An identification card which identifies you as a member of the Universal Photographers organization. This is of the greatest value in securing admission to events and assistance in securing photographs.
9. One year FREE consultation, criticism and Sales Service.
10. LIST OF BUYERS. An up to date list of firms and individuals who purchase photographs from photographic journalists.

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